

Tsunami Conflict

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from a beach in Vietnam
a young soldier plucked a shell—
the remains of a white shell—
a spiraled—nautilus—breast-shaped—round—shell
that he carried back to the jungle
of night's death, surreality of rotting flesh—
a camaraderie of confusion.

the soldier's thumb
fits into the underside of curves and topical ridges
an inverted nipple
a confluence of politics
a paradox of ethics
that he carries in his rucksack
and M-16.

an old man—an old woman—
the soldier—the shell—
children—gains—losses
washing across beaches
his thumb still in the shell
still tracing
the topography of survival.